

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

### Voice from 4 to 8

Dear Mission Hill School Friends, Families, Students and Staff,

It's 4:00 on a Tuesday afternoon and I'm sitting in a very small chair, one meant for a four or five year-old child. I'm looking at one Mission Hill teacher standing, addressing the rest of the staff with a description of how our time together will be spent. She explains that three teachers will share ideas about their thematic curriculums, *Who Counts?* This school-wide theme is about voice, empowerment, power, who makes decisions, etc. Minutes later three other teachers begin to speak. Each teacher shares a question or dilemma about his or her plans. In small groups we talk more. There is an exchange of questions among participants, How can I modify my curriculum to reach students who have a wide range of needs? How many teachers are in the room? What are the priorities? Where is the art? The group has a discussion. This time is important, time to give each other undivided attention and give value to each voice.

#### **REMINDERS**

##### ***October***

Thu. 10/25, Family Volunteer Day

Sat. 10/27, Family Volunteer Day

Mon. 10/29, Tech Goes Home  
begins (see attached flyer)

##### ***November***

Sun. 11/4, Turn clocks back 1 hour

Tue. 11/6, VOTE!

Mon. 11/12, NO SCHOOL,  
Veterans Day

Thu. 11/15, 5:45: Family Council

Now it's 6:00pm: school neighbors, BPS transportation staff and Mission Hill staff begin to mill around the first floor of our school. I hear their voices and begin to walk toward them. We walk through the building together for a brief tour, then settle into chairs on the first floor to begin a conversation. Neighbors air frustrations about lack of notification regarding the school buses on Carolina Street and traffic pattern changes. What surfaces during the conversation is the power of voice, the effects of not being heard, and what happens when there is a change in the pattern of who speaks and who listens.

It's 8:00 and the community meeting is winding down. The question, What is your take away from today's conversation about 'Who Counts?' pops into my head from today's earlier staff curriculum share.

My take away about voice on this evening? Voice with grace is a beautiful thing. Nelson Mandela and Kofi Anan don't exude arrogance in their persistence. Is there a way to teach children this? To teach children to be tenacious in a way that leads to involvement and not marginalization because of their race, class, gender,

economic status, etc. How can we use our school community and its real life situations, a microcosm of our society, to teach students about models of using voice and the connection to character? How does understanding our power affect our willingness to step aside or step up? What does this say about our willingness to live with things the way they are because to not do so would silence others? And what value do we each see in that?

~Ayla Gavins

## From the Classrooms

### 3 & 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

*Who Counts?* Is the overarching theme right now at the Mission Hill School. What does that mean for three and four year-olds? It means we are learning that in our community, everyone is important and everyone matters. This is a big deal for many young children, who are ego-centric by nature, and are just beginning to understand that everyone has feelings, wants and needs. (And that you can't always get what you want - sometimes you have to compromise... or wait a bit...or share.)

We are learning to use our words to ask for what we want and need (instead of grabbing, crying or pushing). We are practicing using the words, "Please"; "Thank you"; "Por Favor"; "Gracias" and also the signs for these words. We are using all three methods to communicate, because everyone in our classroom is important, and we all want to be able to communicate with everyone.

~Geraldyn McLaughlin  
& Donna Winder

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

"If the trees are tall, I can't get the apples," Gianna said on our ride to Shelburne Farms. "How will you pick the apples?" I asked. "A ladder," she replied. Fortunately for Gianna, the apple trees at the farm are perfect for

our students to pick without having to use a ladder. We did, however, spy a very fancy triangular ladder there.

The rain that was pouring down as we left did not dampen their spirits. It was as if the rain was irrelevant. They were going apple picking and a little rain was not going to stop anything. As soon as we got there the rain stopped. We ate cider doughnuts as we rode the hay-filled tractor into the orchard.

Children's eyes opened wide as they saw the apples. They immediately started to fill their bags. It was great to see the different dynamics of the children as they picked. There were some students who would inspect the apples carefully before they picked them. There were others who wanted to pick all of them.

I asked the children to share their favorite thoughts on the day. Elliot said, "I am a real apple picker." Luis: "I like the trees." Amos: "Seeing the animals." Gianna: "Picking apples." Adler: "Going to see the animals." Shane: "Seeing the horses." Eli, "My favorite thing to do was have the hot doughnuts." Cyrus: "To go on the hayride and have the hot doughnuts." Come by and read our predictions of what we thought we might see, and our favorite parts of the trip reflections.

~Kathy D'Andrea

#### Room 107

*Farmer Brown had 10 green apples hanging on a tree.  
Farmer Brown had 10 green apples hanging on a tree,  
And he plucked 1 apple and he ate it greedily.*

*Now there're 9 green apples hanging on a tree!*

This song is a favorite in Room 107. In fact, we shared it with the community at Friday Share several weeks ago. What many of our students did not expect was that they would soon get a chance to pick apples just like Farmer Brown on what has become an annual apple-picking trip for several grades. After Friday Share, we waited for our bus to arrive. Mr. Leroy, our bus driver and owner of Adams Motor Transportation, finally arrived surprising many of us with two coach buses instead of the regular yellow school buses.

While it rained on the way up, we passed the time singing songs like Farmer Brown and The Wheels on the Bus. However, as we pulled closer to Shelburne Farms, the rain ceased and the sun shone enough, and just in time, for us to get in our hayride, pick some apples, eat some donuts and visit some very cool animals. Many of our students slept on the way back...evidence of another successful, fun-filled apple picking trip. Thank you Shelburne Farms and thank you Adams Motor Transportation for letting us travel in style.

~Jada Brown & JoAnn  
Hawkesworth

#### Room 109

On Friday, the Magic Dragons joined Jada's, Kathy's, Melissa's, and Jenerra's classes on an apple picking trip. It was raining on the long ride out to where one child commented, "must be the

countryside,” but our spirits were high. On the bus, I overheard groups of two or three children singing songs from Friday Share, some they had only heard once! As we drew closer, the children began noticing the horses, ducks, fall leaves, and pumpkins they had predicted we would see on our trip. Excitement was building. Once we arrived at the farm, we loaded up on the back of a tractor for a hayride to the orchard. In what would prove to be the favorite part of the day for more than one, we enjoyed warm cider donuts on the ride.

In the orchard, some children quickly filled up their bags, while others explored their new environment. A large milkweed patch was discovered right next to an apple tree. Zora pointed out that the milkweed was covered by “a million aphids”. The children searched, but could not find a Monarch caterpillar; evidence that they are on their way to Mexico! These little moments had me reflecting on the community and classroom culture we have established over the past six weeks. And on the cold hayride back to the bus, the children blew out big puffs of condensation. “Look, Jenny! We’re dragons!” Yes, we are.

~Jenny Goldstein

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

Picture this: 240 children and adults gathered in an open space on the first floor of our building. They are singing, sharing work, announcements and acts of kindness. EVERY Friday this

happens for 30 minutes as we gather as a school community for Friday Share.

During Friday Share, children from all age groups stand with their teachers and present work. Sometimes the work is completed and other times it is work in progress. This is a great time to get a snapshot of what is happening in various classrooms.

Friday Share is open to all members of our community including family members. No advanced notice is needed if you would like to join us. We start at 9:45 AM sharp and finish around 10:15 AM. If you have never visited during Friday Share I encourage you to do so. It will give you a snapshot of what is going on here at Mission Hill. So, check your calendars, and the next time you have 30 minutes to spare on a Friday morning, stop by and join us for Friday Share.

~Amina Michel-Lord,  
& Jenerra Williams

### Room 205

“Look! Look! Ms. Brenda! I found a roly poly!”

“Look at this centipede! It looks like it has hundreds of legs!”

“There are mushrooms on the log!”

These were a few of the many exciting remarks Room 205 children made during the scavenger hunt in a forest. The class went on a field trip to Boston Nature Center last Friday. Although it was drizzling and the temperature was not ideal to be outdoors in the forest, the not-so-perfect weather in no way lessened the children’s enthusiasm

to get close to nature and all of its wonderful creatures. The children were ecstatic to see some wild turkeys nearby. Under the guidance of Andrew, our teacher naturalist, children collected different leaves, seeds, and bugs to bring back to the classroom for detailed observations. With the aid of various magnifying tools, children were able to take a close look at the items they collected from the forest. The children had a lot of fun playing in the center’s nature nook before we headed back to school. This field trip to Boston Nature Center was just the beginning of our collaboration with Mass Audubon. Many more exciting and wonderful experiences with nature are yet to come!

~Brenda Lau

### Room 217

Cameo, Fuji, Honey Crisp, Roxbury Russet, Pink Lady, Mutsu, Granny Smith, Brock, King Lucious... these are all names of something and we tasted them all. Some are red and some are green and many have a bit of each; some are shiny and some are rough, some are small and long and some are very, very big. Which apple surprises your mouth? Which apple do you like the best? Do you choose it by color or shape or size? Is there a star inside? How do you find it?

We went apple picking and all of our apples are Empires, the last left on the trees this season. They are deep red and very crunchy right off the tree, sweet and juicy. Each child wants a photo taken with a favorite apple or with a

full bag. And we discover that biting into an apple is a good way to pop out a wiggly tooth!

Studying apples is fun and seasonal (and tasty), but it also gives us serious practice at looking carefully, noticing important qualities, and thinking about similarities and differences. Next week we'll be dusting off our cider press...

~Melissa Tonachel

Amy Dolman & Ben Hallas

## Grades Three & Four

### Room 207

The 2012 elections begin next week in room 207. Students have been working on the writing process (pre-writing, first draft, peer editing, second draft, publishing) as they create an "If I were President" speech. Students were asked to include two changes they would make in the United States and one change they would make within the Mission Hill School. The speech will also include a detailed plan for the change they would like to create. Students willing to run for an in-class presidential election race would read their speeches and participate in the process. All students will play other roles within a presidential race and will learn the voting process. The in class presidential election will take place during the middle weeks of October. Students in room 207 are excited and will share the results when we have concluded the project. Thanks and Gracias.

~Robert Baez

### Room 216

I, Jessica Watt, am honored to be a member of the room 216 community! I am a senior at Wheelock College, and am from a town in Connecticut called Farmington. This past month and a half has offered me a great experience, with many more opportunities to come.

Over the past week, the students have been coming up with very creative stories. Many of the stories involve zombies, aliens, The Hulk, and other interesting characters. Making stories and figuring out the difference between nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs has proven to be a successful and ongoing process. We began by exploring the basic structures of sentences by attaching individual words to large boards with Velcro™. This allowed us to construct many different sentences by moving our words around, adding new words as we went, and editing and revising along the way. As students' skills developed, we moved from sentences to stories while adding elements such as punctuation, sentence flow, and plot. The students have been able to work together and learn how to work in groups in order to create some of these stories. They are quickly gaining many academic and social skills. It is exciting to see the results of their hard work and creative thinking.

~Jessica Watt, James McGovern  
& Erica Switzer

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

"How many of you have ever experienced something like that before?" I have heard that question asked about many skits over the many years when attending Urban Improv with children. There are times when most of the kids can relate directly to elements of the theme for the week and the skit. Other times, however, children have had very little experience with the challenging situations the actors are discussing, particularly specific types of bullying, peer pressure and outside of school scenarios. That is not to say the topics are not age appropriate, just that many of our kids seem to be shielded from certain things for the most part. This may be partially due to the specific demographic of our student population. However, it is the Mission Hill habits of mind, and the intentionality of our school culture that provides an atmosphere of respect and empathy not always present elsewhere.

This is especially true for the "in school" scenarios. Some have reported direct experiences at home, or outside with neighborhood friends, but not here at MHS. This is often reinforced by the reactions of the actors who are used to having far more hands go up and kids sharing examples when doing the workshop for 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes from schools other than



Crick referred to as “the secret of life” almost sixty years ago. Come by Room 214 to learn more about this amazing molecule.

~Jacob Wheeler & Chris Barnes

## Hot Topics

### Box Tops are Due!

Turn in your Box Tops now! November 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for submitting them so we can get our first check for the year in December. We need to collect, sort, package and ship them right away, so please hand yours in so we can turn them into cash for our school. Turn them in to Courtney by Friday, October 26<sup>th</sup>!

### Family Council Elections

Check out the bios of folks running for Family Council as a supplement to THIS newsletter. Didn't get a copy? See Courtney down in Room 114. We also encourage you to stop by and meet the candidates for all positions on Wednesday, 10/24 from 5:00 to 6:00 for an informal meet and greet before filling in your ballots or join everyone at Friday Share (9:40-10:15) on the 26th where the candidates for Co-Chair will be introduced.

### Brrr!

It's getting colder out and it's time to start thinking about winter clothing. Please let Courtney know if you would like assistance in getting winter gear for your child. She will

have winter coats in the next few weeks – available to any child (infants and siblings too) who needs one. Call, email, or stop by Room 114.

### Parent University

Fall Learning Session - Saturday, November 17, 2012 8:30-3:30 @ Northeastern University in the Curry Student Center. Parent University is an opportunity for parents and caregivers to learn information about their vital responsibility in shaping children's lives. Sessions focus on child development, what children are learning in schools, advocacy, parent leadership and effective parenting skills. Parent University is FREE for all BPS

parents. Register online or contact Courtney in Room 114 for more information.

Roxbury Community College & Jobnet One Stop Career Center invites you to their Community Career Fair on Tuesday October 23, 12:00am–3:00pm at Roxbury Community College. Meet with over 30 employers.

### Courtney's Corner

Check out Courtney's Corner for information on various programs and resources for you and your family.

### Rincón de Courtney

Mira la información que esta fuera en el “Rincón de Courtney” para información sobre varios programas y

recursos para  
ti y tu



familia.

### Mission Hill School

*A Boston Public Pilot School*

Deborah Meier, Founder

Ayla Gavins, Principal

20 Child Street

Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

617.635.6384 (office)

617.635.6419 (fax)

[www.missionhillschool.org](http://www.missionhillschool.org)